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**REMARKS BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA
THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND INAUGURATION:
AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC VALUES AT WORK**

**DHAKA UNIVERSITY
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT
SENATE BHAVAN
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Vice Chancellor, Professor Arefin Siddique,
Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Fariuddin Ahmed,
Chair of the Department of Political Science, Professor Gyasuddin Molla,
Faculty and students of political science, friends and colleagues,
Asalaam M'laikum and good morning.

The cavernous hall was nearly empty.

There were only a dozen or so of us left.

Everyone else had gone.

They had learned that President Obama was re-elected, so they left.

I could not go.

I was glued to my chair, and my eyes were riveted to the CNN program on the jumbo TV screen.

I could not go.

I had to witness the finest moment of American democracy, a moment that comes but once every four years.

I held myself tight as I shuddered in anticipation.

Tears welled up in my eyes as I waited.

Then the giant screen flickered to an empty stage in Boston ...

Mitt Romney, surrounded by his family, glided across the stage, approached the microphone, and declared to America and the world ...
... that he had just called President Obama to congratulate him on his victory.

In Romney's words: "I so wish that I had been able to fulfill your hopes to lead the country in a different direction, but the nation chose another leader, and so ... I join with you to earnestly pray for him and for this great nation."

A few minutes later the image on the big screen shifted to Chicago, where President Obama and his family took the stage and he declared, "I just spoke with Governor Romney, and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign ... the Romney family has chosen to give back to America through public service, and that is a legacy that we honor and applaud tonight. In the weeks ahead, I also look forward to sitting down with Governor Romney to talk about where we can work together to move this country forward."

I tried to hide the tears streaming down my cheeks.

This is American democracy at its finest.

Winner and loser congratulate each other, honor each other, and commit to each other to work together to the common good.

This tradition of graceful concession and gracious victory is a hallmark of American democracy.

In a few weeks the presidential election cycle will play out to the end.

On January 21 Barack Hussein Obama will take the oath of office as President of the United States.

This will be the 57th time that a U.S. president has been sworn in for a four-year term since 1789, when George Washington first took the same oath from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The oath by which an American president assumes power is simple ... only 35 words. The inauguration of our president will be accompanied with great fanfare ... a huge parade down Pennsylvania Avenue and a multitude of glittery balls.

Few will contemplate the deep importance of this grand finale to the presidential election process ...

Few will consider that the leadership of one of the world's largest and most powerful nations was determined by a peaceful process, a process that all accept, a process whose results are regarded as a true reflection of the will of the people.

The presidential election process reflects American democratic values ... values that are at the heart of what it means to be American ... values that define America.

These beliefs in democracy are values that we share with the people of Bangladesh and around the world ... values that we share with all who love freedom and government of, by and for the people.

Early morning, November 7 during our election gala at the Westin Hotel, I asked everyone to pause to reflect on the bigger picture of what was playing out before our very eyes:

We were witnessing democracy.

We were seeing an expression of human liberty, manifesting the freedom to choose, the freedom to be heard, the freedom to contribute to the future direction of the nation.

I told the hundreds of election viewers that morning that democracy doesn't stop with elections ... peaceful transitions in power are just as vital.

Peaceful transitions demonstrate that today's losers might be tomorrow's winners, and vice versa. Peaceful transitions legitimize democracy.

America's democracy is founded on the peaceful transition of power and other core beliefs.

We value competition through which political aspirants are compelled to be responsive to citizens' needs.

We value accountability, accountability of those who govern to those whom they govern.

We value checks and balances of power ... no one has a monopoly on wisdom ... the opposition has a critical role to play in keeping the governing party honest and in offering alternative views ... absolute power rests only with the people ... not with those who govern. We value and demand honesty and integrity from our leaders.

These values are the foundation of America's democracy.

Although these core values have remained consistent since our Constitution first came into effect over 226 years ago, building democracy is a process that has no end ... and we in America continue to work on perfecting our democracy.

The challenges are many.

Our national elections have become enormously and outrageously expensive. The just concluded presidential elections cost nearly \$2 billion! The need for money opens the door for excessive influence by special interests.

Increasingly, our elections play out through the media, where campaigning is often by sound bite rather than in-depth debate of the issues.

As we saw in this last campaign, the presidential elections process is long (almost two years), arduous, bitter, divisive, filled with personal attacks that can overshadow the critical issues at stake.

These challenges are real; these challenges are significant.

Nonetheless, in my view and in that of most observers, the elections that are finishing now in America truly and accurately reflect the will of the American people ... democracy continues to work in America, despite the challenges, shortcomings and imperfections.

Bangladesh, like America, like democracies everywhere, endeavors to strengthen and deepen its own democratic institutions and traditions.

Democracy in Bangladesh, like in America, like in democracies everywhere, faces challenges. As I noted earlier, building democracy is a never ending process; building democracy is a continual work in process.

... and that's where you come in.

As students of political science, many of you may be considering a career in public service or politics.

I encourage you to pursue such ambitions ... your country needs you to help build and strengthen democracy.

I am pleased that America is Bangladesh's partner in strengthening the nation's democratic institutions.

This partnership is engaged on so many fronts:

... strengthening the institutions of local governance,

... strengthening parliament and its role in the democratic process,

... strengthening the institutions that endeavor to hold government accountable,

... strengthening the political parties so they can better reflect the will of the people,

... and building the capacity of civil society – both the people and the institutions - to hold government accountable and work in every sector toward a more prosperous Bangladesh.

The newest element of our partnership is the Edward M. Kennedy Center for Public Service and the Arts, located nearby on Old Road 27 in the Midas Building in Dhanmondi.

It is a beautiful and innovative space ... a space designed to engage and inspire Bangladeshi youth, the rising generation ... a place where ideas can be debated and come to life.

Dhaka University is that kind of place, too, and so I encourage all of you to be active and frequent participants at the EMK Center ...

... and I encourage each of you to relentlessly pursue your own aspirations and dreams, for you and your generation are Bangladesh's future ... you and your generation will be charged with leading this great nation as it endeavors to perfect its own democracy to the benefit of the wonderful Bangladeshi people.

All nations must create and tread their own path to peace, health and prosperity.

I believe there is no better way than through democracy.

In thirteen days, when Barack Obama raises his right hand and repeats a simple oath, another brick will be added to building and strengthening democracy in America.

Your challenge in the months, years, decades ahead is to add as many bricks as you can to building, to strengthening democracy in Bangladesh.

For the sake of this great nation and the wonderful Bangladeshi people, I wish you well.

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**As prepared for delivery*